

Washington, DC -- To help seniors on fixed incomes who face rising costs for food and prescription medication, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) announced today that he is cosponsoring legislation to make sure Social Security benefits keep up with the unique needs of local seniors.

“As the cost of gas, food and medicine skyrocket, local seniors on fixed incomes are struggling to make ends meet,” **Arcuri said to local seniors at the Parkway Senior Center in Utica today**. “Social Security is a binding contract this country made with generations of workers and it is unacceptable that benefits haven’t kept up with rising costs. I am proud to cosponsor this legislation to make sure the Social Security system factors in seniors’ unique purchasing needs – making sure we honor our commitment to the men and women who made this country great.”

Arcuri is a cosponsor of the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act of 2007 (H.R. 2032), which would establish a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) specifically for senior citizens. A senior specific COLA would take into account their buying habits and ensure they receive a fair benefit adjustment that reflects their higher costs of living

This year the Social Security Administration announced that the COLA would be 2.3%, or about \$24 per month for the average retiree. For seniors that rely on Social Security as their only source of monthly income, this means getting by on \$12,948 for the whole year. This year’s increase is negligible compared to the skyrocketing prices of health care, prescription drugs, energy, and housing.

Each year the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) calculates the COLA based on studies of a number of goods and services consumed by average workers. Unfortunately, the BLS studies do not take into account the purchasing habits of senior citizens who spend large portions of their income on medical care and prescription drugs. Thus, there is currently no accurate indicator of seniors’ real purchasing needs. Seniors’ medical costs have risen by 238% over the last 20 years and prescription drug costs rose by 4.3 times the rate of inflation over the last three years.

To make sure local seniors get the Social Security benefits they deserve, Arcuri is also a cosponsor of The Social Security Customer Service Improvement Act (H.R.5110), to strengthen

Social Security Administration (SSA) services at local field offices. H.R.5110 would allow Congressional oversight over local office operations to preserve critical services for members of the community who need it most.

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